

LAUNCHING THE NEW FASCIST INTERNATIONAL

Hitler's Beaten Minions Rally Their Forces

L. POLIAKOV

MORE than a year ago, in May 1951, Swedish Malmö was the scene of a strange congress attended by several dozen people who came from five or six different Western European countries. This meeting caused something of a stir all over the world, and its proceedings were reported in the *New York Times*, the *Paris Monde*, and other big newspapers. Then, as usually happens, they lost interest. Yet this congress constituted the first open move to create international unity among fascists in postwar Europe—perhaps the first open move ever toward such an end.

The names of those who visited the Malmö congress are not altogether unfamiliar to the European public: there were Maurice Bardèche and Henri Bernard of France, Augusto de Marsanich and Fabio Lonciari of Italy, Franz Richter and K. H. Priester of Germany, Per Engdahl of Sweden, and a good number of others. (Oswald Mosley and Otto Skorzeny had been invited but were unable to obtain visas.) Easily the most notorious was the Frenchman Maurice Bardèche, who considers himself the spiritual heir of his brother-in-law, the late Robert Brasillach, one of the superior hacks of the French collaborationist press, who was executed after the Liberation. Since 1948 Bardèche has been active as apologist for his

brother-in-law and, by extension, for all other war criminals. He has published a number of anti-Jewish, anti-American, and practically openly pro-Hitler pamphlets whose aggressive cynicism and clever sophistries have found a wide public, with translations in every European language. Such was their effect that even in the tolerant atmosphere of France today the authorities felt compelled to intervene, and some time after the Malmö meeting, in April 1952, Bardèche was sentenced to a year in prison for "inciting to violence."

Franz Richter, then a member of the Bonn parliament, owes his present notoriety to a scandal that broke when it was discovered that he was really a former Nazi vice-Gauleiter named Fritz Roessler. Arrested in the spring of 1952, while parliament was in full session, Roessler-Richter was found guilty on two counts of forgery and misrepresentation, and is now in jail.

Augusto de Marsanich, once a minister under Mussolini, is secretary-general of a political party called the Italian Social Movement. Per Engdahl has been an active leader of Swedish fascism for twenty years; Otto Skorzeny is famous as the SS desperado who, among other feats, freed Mussolini from his Grand Sasso prison in September 1944. If the Malmö congress couldn't boast of a single figure who had played an important role before 1945, it could at least claim the presence of people who had served fascism long and loyally.

After four days of deliberation the members of the congress published a manifesto calling for: "An independent and united Europe; German rearmament subject to the equality of German rights; replacement of the Atlantic Pact, in its present unsatisfactory form, by a European Union of De-

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fense forming a part of a system of alliances with non-European powers; inclusion of Spain in the European Union of Defense, as well as the aim of convincing hesitant pro-Communist elements to align themselves with the national socialist movement." Before closing, the congress also decided to set up a permanent committee of four members (Bardèche, Engdahl, de Marsanich, Priester), along with a European secretariat whose headquarters would be in Trieste. The choice of this international city was no doubt intended as a concrete symbol of these neo-fascists' ambition to unify Europe in their own way.

BUT wasn't it a little odd for the terms "fascism" and "international" to be linked together? By definition, fascism is a product of hypertrophied chauvinism, hence is strictly nationalist in character. Mussolini was the first to say that fascism was not exportable. How did it happen, then, that its latter-day champions in Europe had become fervent internationalists?

If Italian fascism was, in fact, an authentically nationalist movement, the limits of the racial claims of Nazism were *from the very beginning*, however, much less clearly defined. This ambiguity became even more conspicuous in the course of Hitler's rabid anti-Jewish campaign, which gained enthusiastic supporters for the Nazis among anti-Semites the world over. Once Hitler's rule had been spread over most of Europe, pro-Nazi sympathies that had only been ideological before the war took on an infinitely more concrete shape. Collaborationist movements and parties came to life, and often to power, in the various occupied countries. It was during those years that the Nazis raised the slogans of a "new order," a "new Europe," and, especially after 1941, a "crusade against Communism." Thousands of profiteers, ambitious schemers, and crackpots, certain of Germany's victory, sold themselves hand and foot to the Nazi cause, and other thousands of young fanatics enlisted in SS foreign legions and fought on the Russian front. Thus by 1945 there were many non-German

Europeans who, to borrow Robert Brasillach's now famous phrase, "had more or less been to bed with Germany"; and though these people might claim to have been inspired by nationalist feelings, in actual effect they had served Nazi Germany alone. As *Nation Europa*, a postwar German magazine that will be dealt with further on, says: "It was only after 1939 that Germany, faced with an enormous number of tasks, turned toward the salutary European idea. War is the father of all things, and it was out of the war that the idea of Europe was born." Thus fascist internationalism was born out of Hitler's efforts to unify Europe under his yoke.

Events after Germany's collapse only increased the solidarity among fascists of all nationalities. The more prominent or clever among them managed to escape the Allied police, and poured by thousands into Spain and South America. An even greater number stayed behind, changed their names, falsified their papers, and lay low in the expectation of better days. At the same time various official Nazi departmental offices and organizations contrived to have their funds—which were frequently enormous—smuggled abroad or secreted in Germany. When the occupation authorities examined their records and vouchers all they could discover was that a lot of money had mysteriously disappeared.

AND SO, after the war, a host of Europeans of every nationality were to be found scattered throughout the world, yet united by many common memories and loyalties. These people enjoyed the favor of governments like Franco's and Perón's and sometimes had considerable money at their disposal. Their very status as political refugees and outlaws inevitably involved them in schemes and intrigues, and around these a revived fascist propaganda sprang up whose content corresponded to the last Nazi slogans of 1941-1944. (Actually, the term "neo-Nazism" would be more accurate when speaking of the opinions and activities of these people, but usage has already established "neo-fascism," which, for that matter, correctly emphasizes the international color of their

aims.) Communication, in a variety of ways, was established between exiled leaders and partisans who had stayed behind in Germany, Italy, and elsewhere. These connections were kept super-secret, of course, but from time to time something would leak out. Thus several months ago, the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, a democratic German newspaper, reported that among the more than one hundred German officers serving as instructors with the Egyptian army were such former SS leaders as Oskar Dirlewanger and the notorious Adolf Eichmann, the organizer of Hitler's holocausts, who disappeared from sight in the final days of the war. This report has not been confirmed, and there may be an error of identification, but even so, the important part played by German military specialists in General Naguib's recent coup d'état seems incontestable.

Neo-fascist activity has in any case become bolder and bolder under the favoring circumstances of the cold war that has divided the world into two blocs and stirred up sentiment for a united Europe. It is this sentiment, coupled with the widespread fear of Communism, that offers internationalist neo-fascism its best chance. That chance varies greatly, of course, from country to country. Pro-Hitlerism was never really able to take root in France; and in spite of appearances to the contrary, a distinction must be made between the genuine collaborators in France and the Vichyites, even if both parties are now eager to whitewash Marshal Pétain's memory. The recent debates on German rearmament in the National Assembly have shown how unanimous French opinion still is in its horror of Hitler fascism.

There are, it is true, some small groups and factions in France today that openly propagandize for fascism, publishing newspapers like *Le Nouveau Prométhée*, *La Victoire*, and especially *Rivarol*, and even organizing rallies under such a slogan as "White men of all countries, unite!" But their field of action scarcely extends beyond a circle of veteran initiates of fascism who represent hardly anyone but themselves. The content of their papers is more often than

not borrowed from German papers of similar complexion—and their funds, too, may come from abroad. As far as is known, the first neo-fascist group to emerge in France after the Liberation called itself "Association of Tenants and Landlords of Good Faith" ("good faith" meaning that these people had bought confiscated Jewish property on the assumption that its owners or their representatives had been disposed of forever). This was symptomatic of the fact that concrete, material interests could indeed rally fascist sympathizers in France, but also that ideology played a negligible role.

ELSEWHERE in Western Europe, from Norway to Belgium, the situation is about the same as regards the countries that were occupied by the Nazis. Italy is the only exception. Founded in 1946, the Italian Social Movement (MSI), which openly calls itself "neo-fascist," was able to win more than 14 per cent of the votes in the scattered municipal elections of May 1952. These results can be more correctly appreciated by looking back at Italy in 1947. When the MSI was still unknown, a party with the absurd name of *Uomo Qualunque* ("Party of the Common Man"—it would be hard to imagine a political party in any other country choosing such a banal title for itself) polled more than 20 per cent of the votes in certain areas. *Uomo Qualunque* disappeared as fast as it had appeared, but its supporters were inherited by the MSI and they contributed greatly to the latter's success in the May elections, which only shows how genuine their fascist zeal is.

The MSI has the outspoken backing of a great number of university and college students, and has won over an important minority of the farm laborers—especially in Southern Italy—who are disappointed by the inadequate agrarian reforms effected so far by the present government. This party expresses for the most part, however, an irritated nationalism that is inspired more by sentimental nostalgia than by a real will to action. Its leaders include—in addition to de Marsanich (who happens to be the

Gentile uncle of Alberto Moravia, the famous half-Jewish Italian novelist)—Prince Borghese, who led Mussolini's shock troops under the "Social Republic" of 1943-45, and the aging Marshal Graziani.

SINCE neo-fascism has been formed by ideas essentially Nazi in character, it stands to reason that a leading role would be played by its German wing. In Western Germany itself the Nazi heritage was rather openly claimed by a party formed in 1949 under the name of Sozialistische Reichspartei (SRP) whose platform called for a "German" socialism, the "subordination of the individual to the common good," and the restoration of Germany's 1939 frontiers. This party also manifested a pronounced hostility to the West in general, and the United States in particular. Headed by Count Wolf von Westarp and Dr. Fritz Dorls (see Norbert Muhlen's "In the Backwash of the Great Crime," COMMENTARY, February 1952), its best-known propagandists were Roessler-Richter, K. H. Priester, and General Otto Remer, whose chief claim to glory is that he thwarted the anti-Hitler coup of July 20, 1944. Modeling itself along the lines of Hitler's party, the SRP had various auxiliary organizations of a para-military character such as a Reichsfront, with membership limited to former servicemen from the ages of twenty-one to thirty, and a Reichsjugend for younger men.

In September of this year the SRP voluntarily dissolved itself after three years of existence in the open—and after a violent faction fight in which Westarp accused Dorls of having taken Communist money, and was expelled from the party when a majority of the leadership ruled that this charge was unfounded. The SRP gave as its reason for dissolution the alleged capture of its membership lists by the government of Soviet-controlled East Germany. But no one took this explanation seriously, coming as it did from men who on several occasions had betrayed suspicious connections with the Communists. It is believed that the real reason for the party's dissolution was the

threat of its suppression by act of the High Court of the Bonn republic, and also, perhaps, the advantages these epigones of Hitler hoped to gain by putting their main emphasis on underground activity while at the same time continuing to carry on in public behind the façade of a more moderate political program and under a different party name.

The SRP had first won worldwide attention when it received 11 per cent of the votes during the local elections in Lower Saxony in May 1951. Contrary to what might have been supposed, the bulk of this support did not come from the refugees expelled by the Russians from the old German border territories in the East, or from the unemployed and other such elements. The party scored its biggest successes in the northern part of Lower Saxony, a region of large and middle-sized farms where, in four electoral districts, it polled relative majorities, while it failed utterly in the more industrialized southern part of the province. The most likely explanation for this lies in the fact that the Third Reich particularly favored the farmers and peasants of Germany, who held a privileged position as symbols of "*Blut und Boden*"; hence regret for the past, rather than present despair or economic distress, is what seems to have motivated the votes of the farmers of Lower Saxony.

The immediate and long-range prospects of neo-Nazism in Germany were well assessed by former High Commissioner McCloy in his 9th Quarterly Report on Germany, dated February 1952: "... the danger of the extreme right is not of a critical nature and—at least in the form of the SRP—does not constitute an immediate threat to the Federal Republic, but there is a potential danger whose nature and importance warrant continued vigilance. The SRP organizational nuclei, which are dotted all over the country, might at a later date expand and grow, should the political climate become suitable for their development."

The results of a public opinion survey recently undertaken by the occupation authorities are also illuminating. The question,

"What would be your attitude if the Nazi party or a similar party came back into power in Germany?" was answered as follows: "I wish it would happen"—13 per cent; "No opinion"—14 per cent; "It would leave me indifferent"—23 per cent; "I don't want it to happen, but I wouldn't do anything to prevent it"—30 per cent.

THE international propaganda of the neo-fascists originates largely in Germany. The Malmö delegates and a number of their sympathizers like Hans Grimm, Alfred Fabre-Luce, SS-General Ramcke, and even von Ribbentrop's widow, appear as contributors in a magazine called *Nation Europa* in the strange company of a few decent people who, apparently, were taken in (André Philip, Arnold Toynbee, Denis de Rougemont, Ortega y Gasset). On the evidence, one can say conclusively that *Nation Europa* is the principal mouthpiece of European neo-fascism. It is published in Coburg, in Germany, and has offices in Sweden, Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland; an Italian edition, *Europa Nazione*, comes out intermittently in Rome.

As its title itself indicates, *Nation Europa* supports the idea of a federated Europe. In an important article in the December 1951 number, someone named Heinrich Sanden suggests a united Europe with "a political headquarters that would incorporate a military command as well as [over-all] economic and transportation authority. Each country would delegate only one representative: in the deliberative stages, his influence would depend on the force of his personality, but in the voting he would have a number of votes proportionate to the population he represented." The author develops this project in much detail, and even foresees new railroad systems with wider rails "such as Hitler planned, the first of which, between Munich and Marseilles, was to have been built in cooperation with France."

Herr Sanden, it is obvious, chooses his examples calculatedly. It is not surprising, therefore, to read in another number of *Nation Europa*—November 1951—that "the

Schuman plan is nothing but a modernized annexation of German provinces, the continuation of Richelieu's policy."

But might not the French fascists be offended by such statements? One of the most notorious of French collaborators, Abel Bonnard—once a member of the Académie Française and now a refugee in Spain—takes it upon himself to explain how national and European patriotism can be reconciled: "... the various patriotisms will unite in the constitution of Europe by exalting rather than weakening themselves, just as each color finds its highest intensity in the rainbow while blending with the other colors. The rainbow is the banner of Europe, and it has always been a symbol of peace," etc., etc. (*Europa Nazione*, February-March 1951.)

This new Europe will be independent, apparently, of its "American educator." In one number after another of *Nation Europa*, contributors express their extreme scorn for American policies—"Roosevelt and his advisors plunged their country into a war that had nothing to do with the interests of the United States"—and their contempt for the American government as such—"that mixture of immaturity and decomposition." What's wrong with the United States is democracy; "in Europe vast sections of the population feel revulsion at the decay of parliamentary democracy." And so on.

The magazine has, however, to soft-pedal certain implications of its general position. It is still impossible in Europe today to preach openly the doctrine of a superior race called on by destiny to rule over other races. But one can hint at such ideas in discussing certain specific political problems—for example, the question of colonialism.

A "Eurafrican empire" happens to be the most cherished of all the ideas put forth by *Nation Europa*, and the largest part of its November 1951 number is devoted to that dream, with Oswald Mosley, in an article entitled "The European Homeland and African *Lebensraum*," describing its general perspectives: "Our living space comprises two essential areas. The first is the

European East: it belongs to the Occident, not the Orient, and we demand its restoration. . . . The second is Africa. Its development is the new and decisive task that faces a unified Europe. . . . Its administration will be carried out in the name of white civilization, whose duty is to develop rich countries for the sake of European well-being, and not to preserve the jungle. . . ." Other contributors insist even more outspokenly on "the white man's burden" and the rights that derive from it.

In view of this it is not surprising that Dr. Malan of South Africa should be the contemporary statesman most enthusiastically acclaimed by the magazine: "Dr. Malan is pursuing a consistent policy in order to consolidate systematically the position of the European man in his country. This policy has been frequently and sharply criticized all over the world, and especially in the British press. Despite all these attacks, Dr. Malan has stood his ground . . . and the important fact is that in South Africa a statesman with Western ideas is thinking about the future on a vast scale; this is a fact that concerns not only the Germans but all Europeans!" (February 1951.) In the November 1951 number, H. Vedder, a South African senator, writes: "Frightful lies have been circulated through the world on the subject of *Apartheid*, and even German newspapers violently attack Dr. Malan as though he intended to enslave the natives. Actually, all he wants to do is grant Blacks and Whites that which rightfully belongs to them, but he does not want to see the Blacks ape the Whites." And Mr. Vedder goes on to make an anti-Semitic point: "Because the Blacks, very numerous in the Cape, have the right to vote together with the Whites, Sam Kahn, a Communist Jew, and Mrs. Ballinger, a Communist Jewess, were sent to Parliament by Negro votes. . . ." (Neither Mr. Kahn nor Mrs. Ballinger, it should be pointed out, is a Communist. The former is actually known for his energetic anti-Communism in the trade unions.)

Franco is the only other contemporary statesman beside Malan to win the esteem

of *Nation Europa*. Pierre de Noinel, presenting Franco to the magazine's readers in its October 1951 number, writes, somewhat guardedly: "Franco's regime cannot be regarded as fascist, because it does not depend exclusively on a single political party. The Western powers are well aware that the Caudillo is very popular, even in the industrial areas in the north of Spain." If the Spanish question has not yet been solved it is because of the hostility in the United States of a "coalition of Puritans, members of the Mosaic faith, and Freemasons." In the same number of the magazine, Carlo Rigo unabashedly calls Mussolini "one of the last great Europeans." Hitler, on the other hand, is generally praised in an allusive way, by being compared, for instance, with Napoleon, who for his part, too, wanted to unify Europe.

ALL this should be enough to show that *Nation Europa's* program boils down to a second edition of Hitler's, adapted to a different time and with some of its touchier items muted. This is particularly true as regards the Jews. It is typical of present-day Europe, which is still haunted, as it were, by the ghosts of six million victims, that the most vicious anti-Semites often begin their declarations of faith by prefixing a statement on the order of "Personally, I'm not anti-Semitic, but—." *Nation Europa* conforms to this practice. "Until 1945 I was not an anti-Semite either in private life or my writings," states Hans Grimm, the notorious German nationalist writer and Nazi fellow-traveler, in the December 1951 issue—but, he adds, "a certain American Jewry" (not the "native Americans") had his latest book banned in Austria. And the prohibition against wearing the Iron Cross in Germany was motivated by the "senile hatreds of the Old Testament." As for Allied postwar policy, Arthur Ehrhardt, the editor himself, writes in the September 1951 number that ". . . the Morgenthau trust was the real wielder of power. It dreamed of only one thing: bloody revenge; the fate of Europe was as indifferent to it then as it is today."

The creation of the State of Israel was "bloodied by cruel massacres" (October 1951). In the main, there is an effort to insinuate that the Jews were the chief guilty parties, and the Germans the chief victims, and to deny as much as possible the massacres perpetrated by the Nazis. On this score the palm goes again to Hans Grimm, who brings off a curious feat of rhetoric:

"The Germans themselves admit that the massacre of Jews in the East constituted an odious cruelty, even if it was only a matter of a million and a half people instead of six million as claimed; far more Germans were killed in the insane expulsions from the East, but that doesn't in the least alter the fact that the massacre of millions of Jews, even if there were only six hundred thousand instead of six million as claimed, constituted a terrible act of inhumanity."

BY WHAT ties are the official spokesmen of the various neo-fascist parties connected with their prospective future leaders who are now still in exile, living incognito, or otherwise concealed? For the present spokesmen of neo-fascism cannot, save in a few cases, be considered its real leaders. This is a delicate question if there ever was one. To raise the scarecrow of "hidden powers" without sufficient proof is a serious matter; and unfortunately, since the information I give below stems largely from official or unofficial secret service sources, it is unverifiable to start with. But the whole question seems serious enough to condone the use of such material.

The German SRP, the Italian MSI, and the fascist organizations of other countries of Western Europe were represented in full force at Malmö. They are also fully represented in the pages of *Nation Europa*. This kind of representation costs a lot of money. One runs across the names of well-known industrialists—Wolff in France, Torlonia, Pignatelli, Colonna in Italy—when looking for the backers of neo-fascism. Their German counterparts are harder to pin down, for industrialists whose names were linked with fascist causes in the past now prefer to adopt

pseudonyms when making contributions to the political causes they favor.

False names in general pop up the moment one begins to investigate the situation further. Thus one Albertini, a former aide of the notorious French collaborator Marcel Déat, who was condemned to five years in prison, has visited Argentina on several occasions under a false name, and was received by President Perón. The ubiquitous Otto Skorzeny shuttles back and forth between Madrid and Germany under a pseudonym; and Walter Schellenberg, former head of Bureau VI (Foreign Information) of the Main Reich Security Office under Hitler, also makes frequent incognito trips to Spain. But in the opinion of those professionally in the know, the most important role in all this surreptitious activity belongs to Rudolf Rahn, a former Nazi diplomat whose last post was that of German emissary to Mussolini's "Social Republic."

As a young career diplomat and party member, Rahn did not make the impression of being a really zealous Nazi. But he was intelligent, personable, and above all ridden with ambition: his rapid rise during the war was unequaled among the diplomats of the Third Reich. When he was second secretary of the German embassy in Paris in 1940, he successfully carried out some very delicate missions involving intrigue in French Syria and Tunisia, attracting the personal attention of Hitler, who decorated him with the *Ritterkreuz mit Schwertern*. Subsequently Rahn was the last German ambassador to Hungary, where he supervised the "liquidation" of the Horthy regency, and he finally became Hitler's special envoy to Mussolini, at which post he remained until Germany's collapse—and he stated that fact before the Nuremberg Tribunal, not without wit, as having made him the "bankruptcy receiver" of the Third Reich's diplomacy. But leopards don't change their spots so easily, and it would seem that this "bankruptcy receiver" is now rather busy launching new political ventures. Reliable authorities say that at the present moment Rahn is the *eminence grise* behind the Verband Deutscher Soldaten, an

outfit that includes the great majority of German veterans' organizations. He is also known to travel frequently between Germany and Spain, and has apparently had several audiences with Franco. The main purpose of these missions, according to informed sources, is "the liberation of funds to be used throughout Germany and countries formerly under German occupation to sustain both propaganda movements and agitators." Rahn now has a particularly convenient commercial façade for his activities since some months ago he became director of the German Coca-Cola company.

Yet it is hardly likely that Rahn in person is the hidden master-mind of the neo-fascist international, or even the sole representative of any such master-mind. During gestation, movements of this kind inevitably give birth to a number of contending cliques. Particular account, as a possible center of power in the neo-fascist international, must be taken of the important Nazi colony in Argentina, which enjoys the protection of President Perón, and probably is kept in touch with Europe by agents whose names are unknown to us. What does seem indisputable is the existence of close connections between the administrators of certain hidden funds in Spain, Argentina, and Germany

itself, and the instigators of a propaganda that is becoming louder and more aggressive every day.

As we have seen, the term "neo-fascism" is really a screen for German neo-Hitlerism, pure and simple, transposed on a European-wide scale. If, at some future date, a united Europe were to materialize, Germany's influence would inevitably be preponderant because of her industrial capacity and dynamism. Thus Germany, more than any other country, holds the key to the whole problem. If, within the framework of a united Europe, a Westarp or a Remer were to come to power in Germany, then a de Marsanich would triumph soon enough in Italy, and a Bardèche in France. Inversely, any success won by the Italian or French neo-fascists would have a highly favorable effect on the chances of German fascism. Nevertheless, in the long run Germany will remain the crucial area. As for the danger inherent in this fact, one can only repeat the extremely circumspect opinion expressed by former High Commissioner McCloy: "The danger . . . is not of a critical nature . . . but there is a potential danger whose nature and importance warrant continued vigilance. . . ."